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DEPT FOR P, EUR, EUR/CARC, EUR/NB
USNATO FOR AMB. VOLKER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/25/2018
TAGS: PREL PGOV PREF GG RU IC

SUBJECT: GEORGIA: ICELAND OPPOSES RUSSIAN RECOGNITION OF S. OSSETIA
AND ABKHAZIA

REF: STATE 91894

Classified By: Amb. Carol van Voorst for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kurt Volker previewed reftel demarche in August 25 meetings with the Icelandic Foreign Minister and other senior officials, and embassy followed up on August 27 to reiterate the points. In press comments on August 26, Foreign Minister Gisladottir immediately condemned the Russian move as "unhelpful." End Summary.

¶2. (U) Icelandic Foreign Minister Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladottir immediately condemned Russia's decision to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states, following a demarche on same by the Russian Ambassador here August 26. Gisladottir described the Russian decision as "inexpedient" and noted that responsible leaders should be looking for ways to calm the situation, not provoke more unrest as Russia has done. Alluding to Chechnya, Gisladottir said that the Russian move may have "consequences that they have not thought through completely."

¶3. (U) For his part, Russian Ambassador Viktor Tatarintsev called a press conference on August 26 to announce the Russian Government's decision as well as his lobbying efforts with FM Gisladottir earlier in the day. Tatarintsev's comments -- including his statement that Russia "naturally insists" that Iceland join in recognizing the two regions -- received wide, if incredulous, press coverage.

¶4. (C) During meetings with Gisladottir and other senior ministry officials on August 25, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kurt Volker discussed the possibility of Russian recognition of the two regions. All were in agreement that the move was a bad one and would be unlikely to gain wide support internationally. PolOff contacted the MFA's Director for International Affairs Nick Hannigan on August 27 to express embassy's appreciation for FM Gisladottir's statement, and to reiterate ref B points. Hannigan noted that the FM was firm in her message to the Russian Ambassador that the Russian decision is extremely unhelpful, and would particularly exacerbate the plight of Georgian IDPs from the two regions.

van Voorst